

12. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.

13. (Amended) Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

- (a) a sheath comprising
 - a proximal hub portion,
 - an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, at least some of the elongated body portion capable of being placed into the body,
 - a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath, and
 - a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines; and
- (b) a valve comprising
 - a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, and
 - one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, none of the slits extending in width to the inner surface of the sheath, the one or more slits capable of allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around the device.

17. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the elongated body portion comprises at least a first section and a second section, a first cross-sectional area of the first section being greater than a second cross-sectional area of the second section.

21. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.

22. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.

23. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the foam material is affixed to a portion of an inner surface of the sheath that defines the passageway.

25. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.

26. (Amended) Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

- (a) a sheath comprising
 - a proximal hub portion,
 - an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, at least some of the elongated body portion capable of being placed into the body,
 - a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath, and
 - a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines; and
- (b) a valve comprising
 - a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, the foam material being affixed to a portion of the inner surface of the sheath, and
 - one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the one or more slits capable of allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around the device.

30. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein none of the one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material extend in width to the inner surface of the sheath.
33. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.
34. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.
36. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the foam material includes a proximal section and a distal section, the one or more slits in the distal section remaining sealed as the flexible medical device is introduced first into the one or more slits in the proximal section.
37. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein none of the one or more self-sealing slits extends in width to an inner surface of the sheath that defines the passageway.
38. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the one or more self-sealing slits substantially prevent the flow of gas into the passageway of the sheath.
39. (Amended) Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:
- (a) a sheath comprising
 - a proximal hub portion,
 - an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion,
 - a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions, and
 - a pair of lines extending at least some of the length, and on opposite sides, of the sheath, at least the sheath being separable along the lines; and
 - (b) a valve comprising
 - an injected foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the passageway, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the foam material and the one or more slits serving as a valve in the passageway of the sheath.

42. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the foam material defines a depression in the proximal section.

44. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the proximal hub portion comprises a pair of wings extending substantially perpendicular to the elongated body portion of the sheath.

45. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the foam material comprises a closed cell foam.

REMARKS

Claims 1-45 are pending in this application. Claims 1-10 were previously withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to an unelected species. Applicant hereby cancels claims 1-10 without prejudice and without any intention of abandoning the subject matter of the claims.

Applicant hereby further cancels claims 11, 24, and 35 without prejudice and without any intention of abandoning the subject matter of the claims. Claims 13-16, 26-29, and 39-41 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims. Claims 13, 26, and 39 have been so amended to include the limitations claimed in now canceled claims 11, 24, and 35. Claims 12, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44, and 45 have been amended to correct their dependency. After entry of the present Amendment, claims 12-23, 25-34, and 36-45 are under consideration. Claims 13, 26, and 39 are the independent claims now pending. Support for the claim amendments can be found in the canceled claims and throughout the specification. No new matter is introduced. In light of the amendment and remarks presented herein, reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims 12-23, 25-34, and 36-45 is respectfully requested.